



Montgomery
County
Commission on
Child Care

Annual Report
2009-2010



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THE COMMISSION ON CHILD CARE

The Honorable Isiah Leggett
Montgomery County Executive

Council Members
Montgomery County Council

The Honorable Nancy Floreen
President, Montgomery County Council

Citizens of Montgomery County

Dear Mr. Leggett, Ms. Floreen, Council Members and Citizens:

The Commission on Child Care is pleased to submit its 2009-2010 Annual Report. The Commission continues to advocate for one of Montgomery County's most vulnerable populations, young children, by promoting access to affordable, quality child care for all our County's children.

This report reflects the combined efforts of parents, child care providers, business representatives, and County government representatives to further the goal that our children are safe, healthy, and learning. We remain focused on assisting policy makers in understanding the importance of quality affordable child care, and the impact of policy decisions on those objectives. We understand the difficult budget choices that the County has faced this past year, and are grateful for your appreciation of the value of child care for our citizens, as well as the risks and costs associated with reducing access to this crucial service.

This year's annual report contains a summary of our work this past year and our recommendations as follows:

- 1) Guard Against Budget Cuts that are Critical for Safety, Health and Well-Being of Children in Child Care
- 2) Maintain Level Funding for Child Care Subsidy Programs
- 3) Establish a Workgroup to Study Alternative Models/Methods to Complement Current Child Care Programs and Ensure Accessibility for Under-Served Areas of the County
- 4) Ensure Professional Development Accessibility for Early Childhood Professionals

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our County and for the County government's strong continuing commitment to our children and our future. We look forward to continuing our productive relationship with public officials in order to meet the needs of this most vulnerable population.

Sincerely,

Wendy Baber
Chair

The Commission on Child Care

Vision

Access to quality, affordable child care for all Montgomery County families.

Mission

To advise the County Executive and County Council of the development, implementation, and effectiveness of government policies, programs, and services that enhance community support for quality, affordable and accessible child care.

Purpose

Section 27-62 of the Montgomery County Code provides authority for the Commission on Child Care to “advise the County Executive and County Council on the development of policies, programs and services that enhance community support for high quality, affordable and accessible child care.”

Meetings

The full Commission meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at the Juvenile Assessment Center, 7300 Calhoun Place, Suite 600, Rockville MD 20855. All meetings are open to the general public.

A significant portion of the Commission’s work is accomplished through the Executive, Programmatic Issues, Public Policy and Membership Committees. Volunteers from the general public are invited to assist the committees. Committee meetings take place on the first Wednesday of the month at 7300 Calhoun Place, with the Programmatic Issues Committee meeting at 6:00 p.m., the Public Policy Committee meeting at 7:00 p.m., and the Executive Committee meeting at 8:00 p.m. All meetings are open to the public.

Please call 240-777-1331; TTY 240-777-1009 for more information regarding full Commission and Committee meetings.



Membership

Commission Year 2009—2010

The Commission has 18 voting members and five to seven non-voting members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Membership includes parents, center and family child care providers and representatives from the business community, general public and government agencies with interests in child care. The Commission is supported through staff effort from the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services.

Voting Members

<i>Parent Representatives</i>	<i>Child Care Provider Representatives</i>	<i>Business and General Public Representatives</i>
Wendy Baber	Khadra Ayorinde	Anne Albright
Jennifer Devine (Chair)	Nuri Funes	Sandy Axelrod
Lori Meyer Drummond	Mimi Hassanein	Maria Carrington
Chad Older	Mary Lou Kitchen	Lyn Schaefer
Meeta Sharma-Holt	Linda Kumkumian	Mindy Thiel (Vice Chair)
	Bernadine Occhiuzzo	
	Maria Payso	

Non-Voting Members

JoAnn Barnes, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Kathi Carey-Fletcher, Montgomery College
Janine Bacquie, Montgomery County Public Schools
Pamela Dunn, Montgomery County Planning Board
Carl Eggleston, Maryland State Department of Education, Office of Child Care
Debbie Shepard, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Carol Walsh, Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families, Inc.
Vacant, Maryland Municipal League

Recommendations

For the past 10 years, Montgomery County has built a system of early childhood care and education that is both effective and comprehensive. The results are impressive and yet fragile. Without the continued support of the Montgomery County Executive and County Council, these gains could erode, jeopardizing all our children and especially our most vulnerable ones.

This system has worked because it has focused on the critical needs of children in child care: early intervention and pre-kindergarten services for at-risk children, health, mental health, training and quality enhancements, child care subsidy programs, home visits, parent education and family support, early childhood public engagement, library services, and recreation and leisure programs. As a result, our children are arriving at kindergarten ready to learn and grow.

The Commission on Child Care is proposing four priority recommendations that continue our successes and have the most beneficial impact during this period of budgetary constraints. In keeping with our overall objectives, these recommendations seek to:

- Protect children from imminent harm
- Support school readiness and build upon the current success rate
- Ensure accessibility to high quality early care for all children
- Strengthen the professional development system for caregivers
- Address the achievement gap in various subgroups (income, race etc.) for all children.



The priority recommendations include:

- 1) Guard Against Budget Cuts that are Critical for Safety, Health and Well-Being of Children in Child Care
- 2) Maintain Level Funding for Child Care Subsidy Programs
- 3) Establish a Workgroup to Study Alternative Models/Methods to Complement Current Child Care Programs and Ensure Accessibility for Under-Served Areas of the County
- 4) Ensure Professional Development Accessibility for Early Childhood Professionals

Protect Our Current Successes

The percentages of “**fully ready**” **incoming kindergarteners** have steadily trended upwards since FY2005:

All Children:

- In FY 2010, 76%
- In FY 2009, 73%

Children who Attended Child Care Centers:

- In FY 2010, 80%
- In FY 2009, 76%

Low income children (as indicated by Free and Reduced Price meal status) have made noteworthy gains – **a 14 point increase** in the past eight years. However, they are still vulnerable and need additional support to do kindergarten work.

Recommendation 1

Guard Against Budget Cuts that are Critical to the Safety, Health and Well-Being of Children in Child Care

Protect against budget cuts affecting sanitation and regulation of Child Care

The Commission on Child Care appreciates the attentiveness of the Montgomery County elected officials to young children despite serious budgetary issues. While the Commission is grateful that many child care services at the program level were largely spared, **the cuts sustained to the infrastructure of child care services gave great cause for alarm.** Of specific concern to the Commission were the cuts to the sanitation services provided at child care centers operated in County facilities and the staff cuts made in the Maryland State Department of Education licensing office.

Cuts to sanitation services undo the Council's hard work and compromise the health and well-being of children who attend child care centers in County buildings. While the County budget shortfall is substantial and unprecedented, there is concern that there is a greater long-term cost to these cuts.

Either due to position abolishment or to impending retirement, the Maryland State Department of Education Montgomery County Office of Child Care (OCC), the State agency that regulates child care, **lost three positions and has the potential to lose three more key positions**, thereby impacting the quality of child care in Montgomery County. The Montgomery County Council has prided itself on its commitment to safe staff/child ratios and group sizes and these cuts will dramatically undermine this impressive track record.

Without appropriate staffing, new child care programs cannot open, thus stifling the earning potential of both child care providers and the families who need their services. More importantly, regulations that the OCC oversees cannot be enforced, jeopardizing the safety and school readiness of our young children. The Commission hopes that the County elected officials will urge the Maryland State Department of Education and state legislators to spare offices, like the OCC, that have already experienced significant cuts.

Basic Sanitation Services in Jeopardy:

- Vacuuming and mopping
- cleaning of kitchens
- provision of adequate paper supplies

OCC Losses:

- three positions are gone
- three more positions could be

Recommendation 1

The Commission on Child Care recommends that the County Executive and County Council advocate against budget cuts for basic sanitation services and for OCC staffing. Despite difficult economic times, these cuts threaten the basic health and safety of our children in Montgomery County.

All children deserve and need quality, affordable care to ensure that they will develop into healthy adults, able to fully participate in the 21st century global economy.

Recommendation 2

Maintain Level Funding for Child Care Subsidy Programs
Keep child care costs within reach for several hundred low-income families

The Child Care Subsidy Program in Montgomery County has implications that are far-reaching. Beyond the obvious impact on elevating a child's individual successes, there are long term benefits for parents, employers, and the health of our economy. Through the Working Parents Assistance Program (WPA), the benefits include:

- (1) giving children an opportunity to be better prepared to succeed in school
- (2) ending the cycle of poverty and moving families towards self-sufficiency
- (3) reducing the barriers to employment
- (4) giving parents, regardless of economic status, an equal opportunity to secure quality, dependable, affordable child care.

Many families cannot afford co-payments. Even with a child care subsidy, parents of low income families find it difficult to pay the unsubsidized portion of the child care fees. Typical out of pocket costs for **families enrolled in subsidy programs often exceed 30% of gross income**, which is still a large percentage of their income. The rising cost of quality child care prevents low income families from accessing the best care for their children and ultimately can increase the socio-economic divide in early learning.

Parents shouldn't be forced to choose between work and their children. Anecdotally, child care providers report that many parents quit work or reduce the number of hours that they work because they cannot afford child care. Children whose parents cannot afford licensed child care must choose either not to work, or to place their children in unlicensed, and sometimes unsafe, child care.

An Example:

Child care can account for 36% of a family's income.

A one-parent family enrolled in the WPA program earning \$40,000 a year with two children in full-time care (one child is an infant) can spend \$14,768 annually on child care. This accounts for 36% of the family's income.

Without WPA, the chance of this family obtaining licensed child care for its children is limited.

Recommendation 2

Maintain funding for the Working Parents Assistance Program (WPA). The WPA subsidy program keeps child care costs within reach for several hundred Montgomery County families. The short and long term aftereffects of unaffordable child care are profound — impacting parental employment status, children having access to quality care, and school readiness.

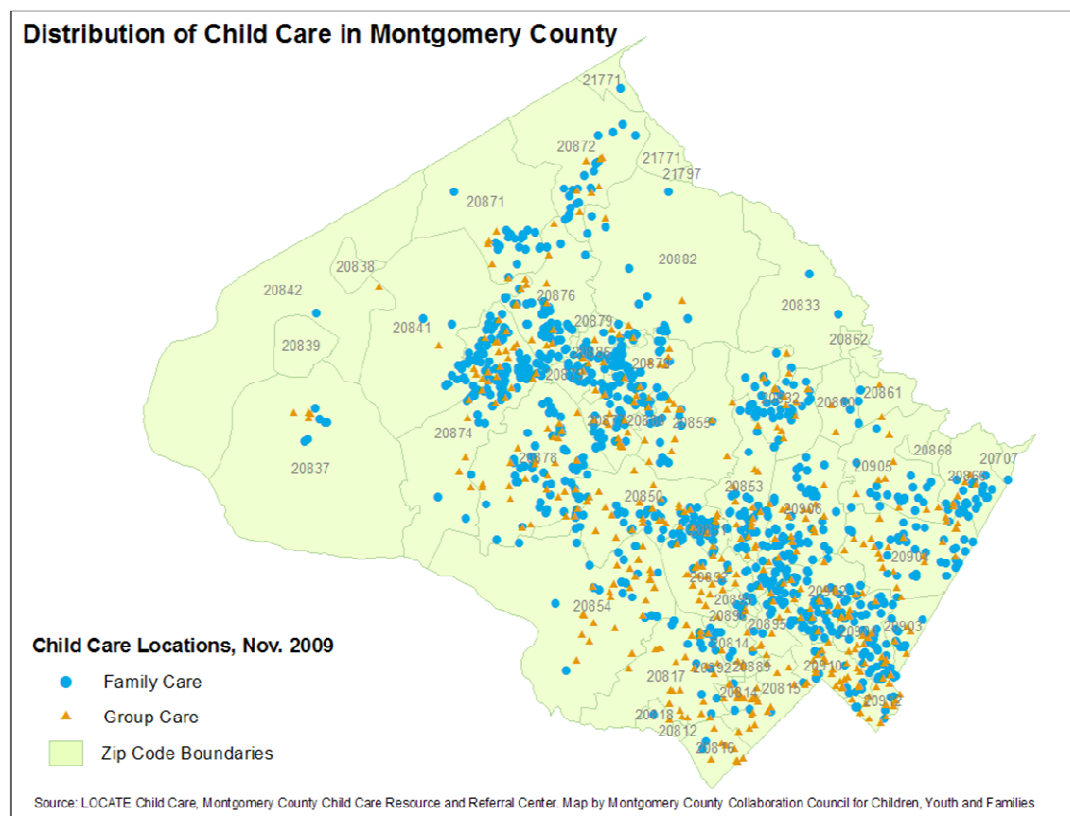
The Commission on Child Care also encourages expanded support for the State-funded Child Care Subsidy program.

Recommendation 3

Establish a Workgroup to Study Alternative Models/Methods to Complement Current Child Care Programs and Ensure Accessibility for Under-Served Areas of the County

Study and evaluate child care subsidies and disparities in funding and training requirements

Current child care program supply is not sufficient to ensure that all children in Montgomery County have access to affordable quality child care or that child care providers are adequately compensated for their services. Approximately 50% of all child care programs in Montgomery County are located in nine zip code areas in Germantown, Gaithersburg, Silver Spring, and Rockville (based on total licensed capacity rather than enrollment). An estimated 58% of all child care programs are located in areas where the elementary school attendance indicates more than 30% of the students receive Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS). In this group, 61% accept child care subsidies. See below.



For low income families, the rising cost of quality child care prevents many of them from accessing the best care for their children and ultimately can increase the socioeconomic divide in early learning. For child care providers, subsidies do not provide enough funding to adequately cover the true cost of the services provided. **As the economy has declined, so has enrollment in many child care centers and family child care providers, leaving many struggling to remain in business.** To further compromise their existence, the training requirements, already a significant provider cost, are increasing. Families need options and quality child care providers need support.

Recommendation 3

Continued

In 2008, the Universal Pre-K Task Force was groundbreaking in its mission to assemble a task force of members made up of a representation of the major stakeholders on the issue, to thoroughly and transparently discuss the issues, and to publish a final report. The work started should be continued to evaluate possible new and innovative options.

Recommendation 3

Following that model, the Commission on Child Care recommends that a workgroup convene to study and evaluate potential options to complement current child care programs such as child care subsidies, disparities in funding, and training requirements.

Some of the options could include contracting with child care providers to serve low income families and encouraging or facilitating shared services. The “shared service” model, adopted by some states, encourages child care providers, especially those in close proximity to each other, to share the expense of specialized expertise such as accounting, payroll, and purchasing. These additional options may help ensure that all Montgomery County families have access to affordable quality child care programs and that child care providers can maintain their businesses.

The Commission on Child Care encourages County elected officials to make plans now to preserve the system of child care so it thrives when the economy begins to grow again.



Recommendation 4

Ensure Professional Development Accessibility for Early Childhood Professionals

Support further opportunities for education matriculation, training and financial incentives

Approximately 31,000 preschool and school age children in Montgomery County are happy, healthy and learning every day because of the tireless efforts of approximately 4,000 caring child care providers. Provider preparation and continual training is essential to the well-being of all those children but is especially critical for those who work with disadvantaged children and children with special needs.

Early childhood care and education research has long acknowledged that no early care and education or school age program can succeed without providers who can inspire curiosity and a love of learning through developmentally appropriate readiness programs. **Training gives child care providers the knowledge that helps them grow professionally as well as spurring program innovation and effectiveness.** But all of this takes an investment, and child care workers are among our lowest paid professionals and the least able to afford professional development, earning about half the salary of local public school teachers for a full-time, year-round job.

Local Policy and Budget Questions Related to Professional Development:

- What is the best way to prepare skilled and effective teachers of young children?
- How can early care and education programs best support teachers in continuing to learn and grow as professionals?
- How do they implement the approaches to early care and education?
- How do providers find out about pathways to professional development and higher education?

The Montgomery County Commission on Child Care (Commission) has again identified a strategic priority for FY10 related to the professional development of early care and education providers in Montgomery County. The impetus for this initiative is three-fold:

1. There are increasing teacher education requirements currently being implemented by: Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Office of Child Care (licensing), MSDE early childhood/child care teacher credentialing, state and national accreditation requirements;
2. There is a growing shortage of qualified early care and education providers and teachers;
3. There is an increasing need for qualified providers serving children with special needs and those for whom English is a second language.

The goal of the Commission for FY 2011 is to assist providers in obtaining access to the professional development and higher education system by publishing a document that graphically explains the educational system, and by advocating for continued scholarship funding and conveniently scheduled and located professional development and higher education classes.

Recommendation 4

Continued

These goals continue to link to a broad network of other local efforts focused on school readiness such as those led by Montgomery College. The development of this network, along with Commission efforts to meet with representatives from local colleges and universities, has enhanced articulation between Montgomery College, Towson and Washington Adventist Universities and the fall 2010 implementation of a part-time baccalaureate degree pathway for child care providers at Universities at Shady Grove.

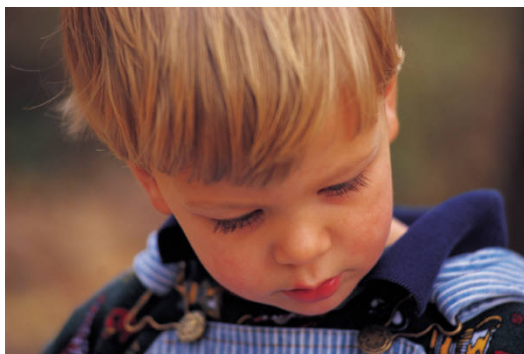
Recommendation 4

The Commission recommends that the County Executive join us in support of further expansion of local higher education matriculation opportunities for child care providers working to earn a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education through early childhood – child care training partnerships between and among Montgomery College, Towson University and Universities at Shady Grove.

Higher child care staff qualifications are directly linked to better outcomes for children. We encourage continued funding for:

- 1) The Montgomery County Child Care Resource & Referral Center professional development training programs for providers;
- 2) Early care and education professional development opportunities for providers and teachers in core knowledge training areas through *Bill No. 7-09: Schools and Camps — Workforce Investment Scholarship*;
- 3) Any new State training requirements for County providers.

Fund a financial incentives program for providers and teachers who voluntarily improve their educational qualifications through training, college credits and professional activities aligned with MSDE licensing, MSDE credentialing, accreditation and/or higher education standards.



Activities 2009-2010

Commission Year 2009-2010:

- Shared the Commission's 2009-2010 Priority Statement with the child care community in an article for the fall issue of the ECCO, the newsletter which is sent out to all licensed and registered child care providers. (9/09)
- Provided a representative to serve on the Child Care in Public Space Tenant Selection Committee. (3/10)
- Prepared a fact sheet "The State of Child Care Subsidy Programs," highlighting the importance of quality child care for school readiness with evidence that out of pocket costs hinders access for low income families. (5/10)
- Coordinated with the Montgomery County Collaboration Council on Children, Youth and Families to collect data and prepare geo maps on low income families' access to child care in order to get a better idea of the match between child care availability and population need. (5/10)
- Developed a flow chart showing professional development and training to assist child care providers to understand how to reach higher levels of education. (5/10)



Guest Speakers:

- Erica Serrano, Program Director, Centro Familia, gave an overview of "Child Care Evaluation Focus Groups with Spanish-Speaking Parents in Montgomery County, Maryland," a report prepared for Centro Familia under contract with the Department of Health and Human Services Early Childhood Services. The report highlighted issues of availability and accessibility to child care for Spanish-speaking families. (9/09)
- Deb Poesse, Montgomery College, Nancy Wiltz, Towson University, Divinia Lea, Washington University, Jody Burghardt and Maria Rosario, Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center, led a discussion with the Programmatic Issues Committee to examine linkages and barriers in training and professional development and higher education for child care providers. (9/09)
- Cheryl-Lynn Jenkins from the Collaboration Council and Maria Rosario from the Child Care Resource and Referral Center met with the Public Policy Committee to discuss the availability of data on child care providers. (12/09)
- Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg attended the March full Commission meeting and addressed, at the Commission's request, the following issues: Child Care Subsidies; Ensuring the Social Emotional Growth of Children with Child Care; Licensing, Quality Child Care and School Readiness; and the Impact of Library Cuts on Children and Early Childhood. Ms. Trachtenberg emphasized the impact of the current economy on the budget, the reduction of County revenues, and the need to prioritize services for the most vulnerable populations.

Activities 2009-2010

Continued

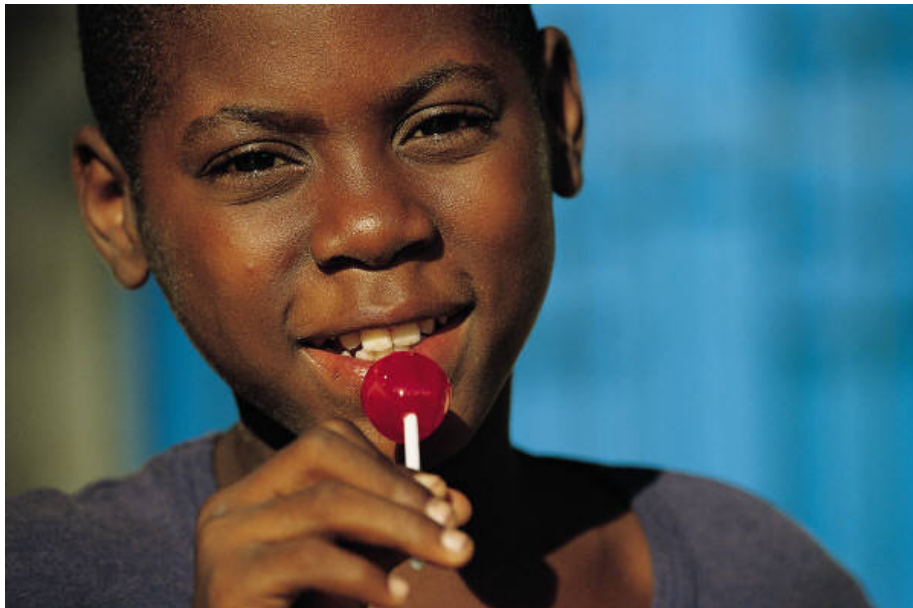
Testimony and Correspondence:

- Submitted “Quality Child Care” and “Child Care Subsidy Programs” as the Commission’s top two policy priorities for the County Council’s Health and Human Services Committee. (9/09)
- Wrote to the County Council in support of the proposed new commercial/residential (CR) zone to encourage development of mixed uses and more “public goods,” such as child care space. (10/09)
- Wrote to State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick to express concern about staff shortages in the Region V (Montgomery County) Office of Child Care. (11/09)
- Participated in the Boards, Committees and Commissions Annual Meeting with the County Executive, stressing the importance of protecting vulnerable children in child care and the success of the current services in child care in helping low income parents achieve their career goals. (3/10)
- Testified before the County Council on the FY11 Operating Budget, supporting the County Executive’s recommendations for continuing funding for Child Care Subsidies and Early Childhood Services. (4/10)
- Alerted the County Executive and County Council to the critical situation facing child care programs in public space, where budget cuts reduced custodial services. (5/10)



Priorities 2010-2011

- Explore the status of access to child care for children with special needs.
- Make professional development accessible to providers.
- Analyze the impact of the selection process for child care in public space, including competition, fairness, and program quality.
- Identify and address the challenges of meeting new requirements for child care providers.
- Guard against budget cuts which may harm children, families, and child care providers and negatively impact safety and health.
- Advocate for affordable child care co-pays and research disparities in types of care settings in State child care subsidy payments.
- Study access to quality, affordable child care across various locations in the County.





Isiah Leggett, County Executive

Uma S. Ahluwalia, Director

Kate Garvey, Chief

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Children, Youth and Families Services

Commission on Child Care

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Language translation and alternative formats of this report are available upon request. For additional information on the Commission, please call or write at the address and telephone numbers listed above.

Montgomery County does not discriminate on the basis of disability in employment or in the admission or access to its programs or services.

